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# MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, December, 1895.

## ANOTHER NOTE ON RECENT BRITICISMS.

IN a little paper in MOD. LANG. NOTES (December, 1894) I suggested the necessity of a dictionary of Briticisms. We have more than one dictionary of Americanisms, although no one of them is really adequate or satisfactory. Yet we have no dictionary of Briticisms, although the current vocabulary of Great Britain abounds in words and phrases peculiar to the inhabitants of the British Isles and often not acceptable to that large majority of the English-speaking peoples which does not inhabit England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The fact has to be faced that the inhabitants of the British Isles are now no longer the sole owners of the English language. The variations of their speech from "standard English" deserve to be recorded quite as much as the variations in America or in Australia. And these British variations from "standard English" are, I think, quite as numerous nowadays as the American variations, abundant as are the latter. In the hope that I may arouse some student of linguistics to undertake the labor of preparing a dictionary of Briticisms I have here brought together a score of them.

**BEWARE** (as a verb). Mr. W. H. Bishop sends an interesting sentence from an article by the Hon. Lionel Tollemache in the *Fortnightly Review* for March, 1876:—

'He [the traveller] will almost certainly take the opposite road, *bewaring* however, if he be an Englishman, of the Germanized Kurhaus.'

**CONTINUATIVENESS.** In the London *Speculator* for June 15th, 1895, is an article on "Lord Acton's First Lecture," in which we find this sentence:—

"It is probable, individually we think almost certain, that a man broke suddenly and completely the *continuativeness* of Peruvian history."

**DIALOGICAL.** The style of the London *Athenæum* is far more slovenly than that of any American critical weekly of like pretensions, and its columns will have to be searched

very carefully by anyone who undertakes to compile a dictionary of Briticisms. In the number for Sept. 7th, 1895, there is a review of a novel in which this sentence is to be found:—

The story is fairly amusing and very flippant; it is anything but serious, and is told in what may be called the *dialogical* style, abounding in forced and cynical repartees.

**DRAW** (as a noun). In a London weekly called the *Queen* and devoted to the discussion of that division of human affairs most interesting to women, there is a department of answers to correspondents. In the number for June 29th, 1895, advice is given to a lady who had apparently enquired how to make an outdoor entertainment profitable:—

"You should engage a local band, and you might inaugurate athletic sports, which are always a good *draw*, also a cricket match. These latter, well advertised, would bring a large assemblage together."

**ELECTROGRAVURE.** In a London monthly review called the *Bookman* and edited by a Mr. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., and in the number for June, 1895, at page 94, is to be found an editorial note referring to a new British edition of Thoreau's 'Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers' as "a pretty edition with an *electrogravure* of Thoreau's Cave." It would be interesting to know whether *electrogravure* is the invention of the editor of the *Bookman*, or of the London publisher of this unauthorized edition of an American book.

**EXCESSED.** On certain of the railroads of England, the habit now obtains of pasting a small label containing only the word *excesced* on the trunks of a passenger who had been forced to pay for the weight of his baggage in excess of the amount allowed by the regulations of the company. This invention of a past participle for a non-existent verb is so daring that I am in daily expectation of seeing some British critic denounce it as an Americanism.

**GROOVY and GROOVINESS.** In a London popular magazine called the *Idler*, in the number for July, 1895, is an article by a Mr. J. F. Nisbet, of which the opening paragraph may be quoted here:

### THE Grooviness of HUMAN NATURE.

You are lucky if, being with a sentimental or philosophical friend at some great public gathering, he does not bore you with the remark: "How strange to think that all these people, men and women, swarming denizens of a vast human ant-hill, have each their histories." It is boring because you must often have thought the same thing yourself. For such a reflection the Crystal Palace or the Earl's Court Exhibition is a convenient spot. Seeing thousands of people in the mass, one is inclined to suppose that they represent thousands of different experiences—that each life has been lived upon lines of its own, with joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, of a special brand. I doubt, however, whether this is so. Human nature is very *groovy*.

**MUNICIPALIZATION:** A letter to the editor of the London *Times*, pointing out the success of the tramways in Glasgow which are owned by the city itself, was published in that journal on August 20th, 1895, and it received as a title this phrase:—"The *Municipalization* of Tramways." The noun *municipalization* seems to imply the word *municipalize*, although this I have not yet happened to see in any British paper.

**PLAYETTE.** Attention has already been called to the Briticisms, *storiette* and *lead-erette*. Akin to these is *playette*. In the London *Queen* for August 24th, 1895, is to be found this paragraph:—

Mr. Fred. Upton has been telling for months many admirable little English *storiettes*. A three volume novel told in five minutes, "A Grandfather in spite of Himself," and "The Story of a Day," linger pleasantly in my memory. In some of the little *playettes* which have had great success, he has been ably aided by his wife.

**RAIL.** In a new British sporting monthly, the *Badminton Magazine*, in the number for August, 1895, there is an article by the Earl of Onslow on "The West End on Wheels." Advice is given as to the best bicycle excursions in the immediate vicinity of London. One paragraph is as follows:—

The Ripley Road has become a proverb among cyclists for excellence of metalling and beauty of scenery, and those who wish to try it cannot do better than *rail* to Surbiton, and ride thence nine miles to the Hut at Wisley, a charming little spot at the edge of a lake with rhododendron-covered islands, surrounded by pine woods and heather. The accommodation

is not, of course, first-class; so if anything in the way of entertainment be contemplated the commissariat department in the Metropolis must be relied on.

The use is to be noted of the word *metalling* to indicate the surface of a macadamized road.

**SERIALIST.** Among the Briticisms included in an earlier paper in these pages was *serialize*, quoted from the columns of the *Author*. It is probably the use of *serialize* that has led to the use of *serialist*, which can be found in the number of the London *World* for June 12th, 1895:—

"Miss Rhoda Broughton figures once again as a *serialist* in *Temple Bar* this month."

**SERMONETTE.** In the "Note on Recent Briticisms" the use of the word *essayette* by Mr. Coventry Patmore was noted. In the advertising columns of the *Bookman* for January, 1895, is to be found a word even more extraordinary, *sermonette*. The Midland Educational Co. Ltd. of Birmingham and Leamington announced that it had just published

Sermonettes from Tennyson. From Studies of Tennyson's Ethical Teachings. By Achilles Taylor. 68 pages, pseudonym 8vo, cloth, 1s.

**SLANGING.** In the London *Athenaeum* for Sept. 7th, 1895, there is a review of a novel which concludes with this elegant sentence:—

The most satisfactory part is the *slanging all round* which they give one another at the end.

**SOLUTION** (as a verb). In a London weekly devoted to sport and called the *Field*, in the number for August 31st, 1895, at page 396, there is an account of a method of repairing a bicycle tire, in the course of which we are informed that "short transverse strips of canvas are *solutioned* on," etc.

**TIRADE** (as a verb). As a noun the French word *tirade* seems to be fairly acclimated in English; but it was left for a British author first to use it as a verb—a use for which there is, I think, no warrant in the French language. In an article on Froude in *Scribner's Magazine* for February, 1895, Mr. Augustine Birrell, Q.C., M.P., has this sentence:—

It was Carlyle's humor to fancy himself a Puritan, and he was perhaps one to this extent, at all events, that he would not allow any

one but himself to *tirade* against 'old Jews' clothes' (p. 153).

UP-TO-DATENESS. In the number of the *Author* for January, 1895, there is a note from Mr. J. M. Lely, containing this paragraph:—

Then as to "up-to-dateness." I have seen this word used in the *Referee*, but I believe it to be considered as generally unfit for serious prose. But by what word or what number of words can its obvious meaning be expressed? Surely the sooner the word, or a better single word, if such can be found, is admitted into serious prose the better.

VERT. The *Century Dictionary* notes as a British colloquialism a verb *to vert*, meaning to change from one religious sect to another. Of late this Britishism has had its meaning enlarged to include a political as well as a religious change of faith. The Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge has kindly sent me a clipping from the London *Daily Telegraph* of July 15th, in which we are informed that "among the seats which should be captured are Reading, which *verted* from Unionism in 1892, Devonport," etc.

WIN (as a noun). The *Galignani Messenger*, although published in France, is the most British of journals; and the searcher for Britishisms can find his game in almost any number of this ill-printed Parisian sheet. But it is not common to find as many as there are in the following paragraph in the issue for July 11th, 1895:—

Never has there been such a popular *win* in the whole history of the Regatta as when Trinity Hall, the only Cambridge eight entered in the Grand Challenge, paddled past the winning-post some 10 lengths ahead of the American Cornell University crew. The time of the race, 7 min. 12 sec., does not make it out very fast, as yesterday's breeze had gone down, and what little air there was blew across and not down the course. Cornell, with their very rapid stroke, gained a little after the start, but soon fell back to the Englishmen. At Fawley—reached in the quick time of 2 min. 23 sec.—they were scarcely more than their canvas ahead. From that point, rowing beautifully together in true 'Varsity style, Hall gradually *wore* the Yankees *down*. The latter's form gradually deteriorated as they got more and more *backed*, and when the Hall boat began to lead them, they caved in altogether, though they did not actually stop.

WORSEMENT. In the United States "special assessments" are levied on real estate which is raised in value by the opening of new

streets, the laying out of squares, etc. In Great Britain the ground landlords have bitterly resented any attempt to make them bear a share of the cost of the municipal improvements which benefitted their property. One of their methods was to call these improvements *betterments*, and then to denounce this word as an Americanism. So far as I know the word is wholly unknown in the United States. In Great Britain its use has led logically to the invention of *worsement* to indicate the injury sometimes done to a special property by a scheme of general improvement. In the *Illustrated London News* of June 1st, 1895, in a report of the doings of Parliament was the following paragraph:—

The Finance Bill was read a third time without amendment, and a compromise on the *betterment* question removed at last the principal obstacle to the prosecution of improvements by the London County Council. This compromise admits the principle of compensation to owners of property for "*worsement*."

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

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#### ARE THE HACKMAN-REAY LOVE-LETTERS GENUINE?

IN the spring of 1779 all London was shocked at the murder of Miss Reay, by Mr. Hackman. The former was the extremely beautiful and accomplished mistress of the dissolute Lord Sandwich, then First Lord of the Admiralty; to him, in the course of seventeen years, she bore nine children, among them Basil Montagu,—the Montagu who tried to make the world believe that Lord Bacon was not the scoundrel he had sometimes been painted. James Hackman, when he met Martha Reay at the Admiralty (1775) and straightway fell in love with her, was a recruiting officer in the army; three years later he sold his commission, in order to return from his post in Ireland, and be near Miss Reay. In 1879 he took orders. Meantime, the hope he had long cherished of marrying (for the affection was reciprocal) was crushed by learning, through a third person, that he was no longer loved. Al-

<sup>1</sup> The Love-Letters of Mr. H. and Miss R. 1775-1779. Edited by Gilbert Burgess. Chicago: Stone & Kimball 1895.